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ABSTRACT

To review and study the needs of latchkey children in Illinois, the services and programming available for such children, and the financial alternatives for such programs, a committee was formed consisting of 11 persons, 10 of whom were school board members from throughout the state. Additionally, the committee was directed to develop recommendations for presentation to the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) Board of Directors. The information contained within this document, adopted as the formal position statement of the IASB in November 1989, includes an outline of the dimensions of the latchkey problem in Illinois; a discussion regarding the costs and financial alternatives for latchkey services; a description of the appropriate role of public schools; and a review of latchkey models in Belleville, Crystal Lake, Evanston, and Urbana. Because the committee believes that local situations are unique and that financing of school district latchkey programs should be at the discretion of the local district, the committee: (1) opposes state or federally mandated latchkey programs; (2) encourages school districts to consider using local resources to meet local latchkey service needs; and (3) recommends that IASB increase school board members' awareness of the need for before/after care for school age children through publications and presentations at meetings. (KM)

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# When school is not in session

## Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children of the Illinois Association of School Boards

**November, 1989**

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# Report of Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children
# Illinois Association of School Boards
# November, 1989

## The Committee's Charge

The committee was charged with reviewing and studying the needs of latchkey children, services and programming available for such children, and financing alternatives for such programs. The committee was also directed to develop recommendations to be presented to the IASB Board of Directors.

## Description of the Committee

The eleven members appointed to the committee were drawn from throughout the state. Ten of the eleven were school board members: Pauline Bastek from Rhodes Elementary S.D. 84.5, Fran Johnson from Crystal Lake CCSD 47, Rosalie Jones from Batavia USD 101, Carol Lewis from Danville CCSD 118, Norm Lisy from Elgin USD U-46, Helen McDermott from Evanston CCSD 65, Barbara Samuel from Bremen CHSD 228, John Siemens from Belleville SD 118, and Pat Turnbull from Urbana SD 116. The committee was chaired by Joy Talsma of Glenbard Township HSD 87. Meribeth Tooke, a representative of the Northern Illinois Gas Company, was chairperson of the IASB Service Associates. Georgiana Luecker was the IASB staff member assigned to the committee.

## Synopsis of the Committee's Activities

The committee met three times: February 24, May 12, and June 9.

Background materials were distributed prior to each meeting and research "assignments" were undertaken following each meeting.

The committee developed a statement of philosophy and a working definition of the term "latchkey children" and explored the need for latchkey services. The committee utilized a variety of print and personal resources to identify such key issues as the dimensions of the problem, especially as they relate to Illinois; the appropriate role(s) for the public schools; financing alternatives, with special attention to affordability and equity concerns; licensing and liability. Resources used by the committee are included in a bibliography at the end of the report.

The committee examined alternative models of delivering latchkey services and looked at exemplary state and national programs. Committee members found that most programs fell within one of several categories: programs operated by schools, programs operated by community not-for-profit organizations (Y's, park districts, etc.), programs developed by employers for their work force, and programs of private for-profit providers (individual homes, franchised daycare, etc.). The committee also found numerous programs that were cooperative ventures of two or more agencies.

## The Committee's Statement of Philosophy

The committee members developed the following statement of philosophy regarding their task:

> We believe that parents have the primary responsibility for providing for the welfare and safety of their children when they are not in school. We further believe that the welfare and safety of children is an appropriate concern and interest of boards of education.
>
> We recognize that a need exists in many communities for appropriate supervision of elementary age school children before and/or after school. We believe that schools may have a role to play at the local level in helping families meet this need.
>
> Therefore, we believe it is appropriate for this committee to review needs and programming and financial alternatives related to the latchkey issue.

## Definition of "Latchkey" Children

The committee defined "latchkey" children as those children who are eligible to attend public elementary schools and need supervision before and/or after school. Therefore, the committee concentrated on the needs of school children in grades K-5.

However, the committee also recognized that quality child care is a family concern and that decisions regarding latchkey care may of necessity also involve consideration of day care for younger siblings. Indeed, in many instances, day care and latchkey programs are operated in conjunction with one another in order to meet families' total need for child care.

The committee is also cognizant of the fact that

some child care professionals prefer the term "self-care" children to the more familiar "latchkey" term because of negative connotations that may accompany the latchkey label.

## The Dimensions of the Problem

It is extremely difficult to pin down the number of latchkey children. In some communities, there may be several hundred children left alone after school. In other communities, a third or more of the school population may be left to their own devices.

It must be recognized that while some people decry the plight of latchkey children, others emphasize that gradual acceptance of self-care responsibility by young people is a part of growing up. Even in individual cases, there can be a genuine difference of perception. The librarian or teacher who observes a child "hanging around" until 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. because he has no where else to go may identify the youngster as a latchkey child in need of services. The child's parents, on the other hand, may feel the child is old enough to take care of himself until dinner. Surveys indicate that some parents believe or profess to believe that an eight-year-old child (or third grader) should be able to care for himself or herself. Such parents may be reluctant to reveal that their children are alone; other parents may counsel their children not to reveal that they will be alone for security reasons. Experts have suggested that the dimensions of the problem are truly hidden from both school and public authorities.

What is very clear, however, is that more and more mothers are joining the work force. National studies indicate that 60-65% of mothers with children under 18 are employed outside of the home. The percentage of working women is even higher among women who are divorced, separated, or have a college degree.

More than 10,000,000 school children are currently living in single-parent family units. B. Frank Brown of the Kettering Foundation notes that "18% of the nation's school children are now living with a lone parent." He also notes that the U.S. Bureau of the Census

> "projects that 48% of all children born in 1980 will live 'a considerable time' with only one parent before they reach the age of 18. In actual numbers, we are talking about more than 12 million children, and that figure is growing at the rate of more than one million a year." (B. Frank Brown, "A Study of the School Needs of Children from One-Parent Families," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 1980, p. 537)

Children of working mothers and single parent families, two rapidly growing segments of the population, are most likely to be in need of child care services.

## The Illinois Problem

In 1985, the University of Chicago conducted a study which "estimated that 642,555 Illinois children under 10 would need day care in 1989." In January 1989, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services "had licensed spaces for only 152,300 of these children--112,815 in centers and 39,505 in homes."

The same University of Chicago study went on to forecast a decreasing demand for day care services for birth-to-4-year-olds but an increase in the need for before- and after-school care for children between 5 and 9 years of age. The study suggested that the need for latchkey care

> "will peak at 341,000 around 1996. Also, about 286,000 children aged 10 to 14 will need some adult supervision by 1990. The size of this group will continue to increase until 2000, when they will number about 336,000." ("Child Care in Illinois Lags Demand," Legislative Reference Unit, p. 8)

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has begun needs assessments in selected areas. The need appears to vary considerably, however, from region to region and even individual community to community within a single region.

## Current Services Available in Illinois

State law requires the State Board of Education to collect data annually from public school districts regarding before- and after-school programs provided in public school buildings. The 1988-89 data revealed that 81 school districts had before- and/or after-school programs. Twenty-five of the 81 programs were operated by the school districts themselves. Fifty-six of the programs were operated by outside agencies who either leased or were granted space in public school buildings. Of these 56 programs, "32% were operated by the YMCA/YWCA, 29% by park districts, and 39% by other groups which mainly included profit or nonprofit day care centers."

Other findings included in the State Board of Education's report:

"1. The total number of students served in these programs was 7,752. The number of students enrolled ranged from 8-765 with a median of 50. In 1987-88, 7,028 students were served. (The 1988-89 enrollment represents) an increase of 10%.

2. The children served ranged in age from 2-14 years with 5-11 years the average age range. Most programs served children from kindergarten through grade 5.

3. In 75% of the programs, both morning and evening programs were offered. In 20%, only evening programs were provided and in 5% morning only programs were offered. In 36% of the programs, services on holidays, institute days, and/or in the summer were offered even when school was not in session.

4. Programs generally operated from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. withmostoperating from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m..

5. Sixty-seven percent of the programs were open to all children in the district who met the age requirement for the program.

6. All but one program required a fee from the parents. The majority had a sliding scale based on parents' need and the ability to pay. The fee range for programs with before- and after-school services was $2 - $77 per week. The median fee was $30 per week.

7. The following activities were offered in more than half of the programs: recreation, storytelling, supervised play, homework supervision, and arts and crafts.

8. Seventy-nine percent of the programs provided an after-school snack, 19% provided breakfast, and 28% provided a midday snack.

9. Thirty-two percent of the programs had a waiting list, consisting of 649 children. The major reason for not serving all children was the lack of space.

10. There were 83 certificated and 499 non-certificated staff employed in the programs (compared to 90 certificated and 408 non-certificated in 1987-88). This is a decrease of almost 8% in certificated staff with an increase in non-certificated staff of more than 22%. Nearly 49% of the programs employed only non-certificated staff. However, in 1987-88 thirty-six percent employed only non-certificated staff.

11. The estimated operational costs for some programs ranged from $500 to $709,155 with the median cost being $34,300. Since most programs could not provide cost data, it was not possible to calculate a cost per child." (Illinois Public Schools with Before and After School Programs, 1988-89, Illinois State Board of Education, September, 1989)

A list of the school districts in Illinois which provided these latchkey services is included in the appendix to this report.

In addition to the services provided in public school buildings, latchkey care is provided in many communities by a variety of profit and nonprofit agencies. The YMCA and YWCA, local recreation boards, and churches provide day care and after-school care in some communities. A variety of non-profit and for-profit day care centers are available in major metropolitan areas. A Chicago consumers' yellow pages directory lists more than 600 day care, nursery schools, and kindergartens; some of these centers also provide before- and after-school programs. Independent in-home care givers operate in many communities. And, in some areas, major employers make daycare and/or latchkey care available to their employees and occasionally to others on a space available basis.

## The Cost of Latchkey/Child Care Services

A major criticism of current latchkey and child care services is the expense of such services. National figures indicate that child care averages $2,000-$3,000 a year for each child. After-school care can cost $10-$35 per week ($520 to $1,820 per year). In some areas, costs are considerably higher. For example, at a nonprofit day care center in Northbrook, Illinois, that is subsidized by the Gertrude Neilsen Foundation and six major corporations, day care for 3-5-year-olds costs $105 per week (or $5,460 per year) and infant care is $165 per week (or $8,580 per year).

In many areas, the children who may be most in need of care or supervision are not able to access the services because of cost. It is for this reason that the members of the Committee felt strongly that sliding scale fee structures or scholarships should be made available to insure that all children would have equal access if services were operated in a public school.

## Financing Alternatives

Any discussion of the care of the school-age child must include consideration of how such programs are to be funded. There are several sources of funding for child care programs. These include: parents; federal, state and regional/local governments; corporations; charitable agencies; and schools.

In addition to the child, the greatest beneficiary of a school-age child care program is certainly the parent; and the parent is an obvious source of funding through payment of fees. When parents bear the cost of a program, an issue which must be addressed is if and how to provide services for the child whose parent(s) are unable to afford a fee based on the per pupil cost of the child-care program. Models which have been used to meet this need include scholarships and fees adjusted to the parents' ability to pay.

Sliding-scale fee systems appear to be successful when there are enough families to generate sufficient revenue to maintain the program and provide care for all who need it.

If the cost of school-age child care is to be borne by some level of government, then the questions which must be satisfactorily answered are, "For what other program might the child care funds have been used?" and "Should the financial support of child-care be considered a priority use of tax dollars?" A measure to create a direct tax on homeowners and businesses to support child care in Fremont, California, was recently rejected by the local voters.

An increasing number of corporations are offering or supporting child care for their employees. The *Chicago Tribune* cited a national study: "A decade ago only 110 employees gave workers child care support. Last year more than 3,000 companies provided help, either on-site day care, subsidies or referral services" (League of Women Voters of Illinois, *Illinois Voter*, June, 1989, p. 1). However, the fact remains that many who most need the child care assistance are not employed in positions which are likely to offer this fringe benefit. Very few corporate centers provide latchkey services.

Some charitable agencies provide funds for child care, but obviously these entities cannot be the primary source of support for most programs.

Schools are often viewed as the most cost effective providers of child care for school-age children. The children are already at the site or could be transported to a central school location. It is pointed out that the educational system benefits from having children in a safe and secure environment before and after school. School facilities exist and have been established at taxpayers' expense. However, the major costs of any child care program are usually those for salaries, insurance, transportation, and daily operating expenses. In surveying model programs, the committee members found few instances of increased costs for liability insurance attributable to before- and after-school programs; however, incremental insurance costs that might result from school age child care should be carefully evaluated. It needs to be recognized that any tax dollars dedicated to child care are dollars which are no longer available for some other school district purpose.

There are successful child care models funded by parents, by corporations, by charitable or community agencies, and by school districts themselves. Even more programs are financed through some combination of the different sources of revenue. The bottom line would appear to be that what works in one community may not work in another.

The essential challenge is to provide affordable child care for every school-age child for whom it is appropriate. If the need for school-age child care is to be completely satisfied, before- and after-school programs must be designed to provide equal access for all children without regard to sex, race, handicapping condition, or parental ability to pay.

## Licensing: An Option To Be Considered

In Illinois, another significant consideration related to providing school-age child care is the Illinois Child Care Act and the "Requirements for Licensure" authorized by the act and administered by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Few people quarrel with the need for standards of child care; however, the licensing procedure may be both time-consuming and costly. A further complication is that certain arrangements are exempt from licensure and others are not.

If the school district operates the child care program in school buildings, then the program need not be licensed by DCFS. However, if the school district contracts with another agency such as the Y to operate the program in the schools, then the state can require that the program be licensed by DCFS. A DCFS-licensed facility must observe the ratio of a maximum of twenty school-age children to one staff member.

Even though a school district is not required to have certification for a program which it operates itself, there are several good arguments for obtaining DCFS certification. One major incentive for seeking certification is the availability of government grants and other sources of state and federal funding.

If the school district wishes to use certain state grants to provide child care services, licensure is required. Under its Site-Administered Contracts Program, DCFS awards contracts to school-age child care programs for a given number of spaces (called "slots") which are reimbursed at a negotiated rate. In the Region-Administered Program, DCFS contracts for services to a specific child. In both cases, families must meet income guidelines for eligibility.

## Appropriate Roles for the Public Schools

The public schools can play a variety of roles in relation to latchkey services for their students. A first step for many districts may be that of providing information to parents about the options for before- and/or after-school care that may be available in the community. In some cases, this referral role may consist of directing interested callers to resource and referral (Project "R & R") services provided by the Depart-

ment of Children and Family Services or other agencies. In Illinois, state funds have been earmarked for the first of sixteen agencies statewide to provide referrals for parents looking for child care. In addition, funds from Project "R & R" will coordinate training and support for people trying to start or expand services in their homes. Such a statewide umbrella of "R & R" is certain to be a valuable adjunct to school districts and corporations in providing resource and referral to parents.

School boards and school districts can also be catalysts in increasing the local community's awareness of the needs for before- and after-school care and supervision for school-age children. School districts can play an active role in meeting the needs of latchkey children by encouraging the development of community-based programs by other agencies, by coordinating transportation between the school site and child care providers, and by making space available to latchkey service providers in school buildings if suitable space is available.

Public schools can also opt to operate before- and after-school programs on their own and in conjunction with various outside agencies.

Respondents in the 20th Annual (1988) Gallup Poll overwhelming endorsed (70% in favor versus 23% opposed) the idea of public school programs that would provide before- and after-school care for latchkey children.

Currently, many exemplary programs involve some form of support from some level of government or outside agency. The "21st Century School" program in Independence, Missouri, has become a national model which "envisions the local elementary school as the quarterback of child-care, latch-key supervision" ("Schools of the 21st Century," March, 1989, p. 2). The local school either provides the service or refers parents to where it is available. Each elementary school functions as a cost-control center with about 20% of the children in day care supported by grants from various social agencies. Other children receive care as a result of scholarships underwritten by outside foundations and trusts. None of the site-based programs are reported to be losing money and some show a modest balance.

In its report, *Right from the Start*, The National Association of State Boards of Education recommends the establishment of "early childhood units in public schools to serve children ages 4 to 8 and their parents" ("Early Childhood Education," IASB Public Relations Service NewsBriefs, Spring, 1989). The report goes on to recommend greater collaboration between public schools and other organizations providing early childhood programs.

Recognizing that parent education is a vital component in cooperative efforts to provide a safe and secure environment for children in the absence of their parents, many agencies and some corporations have developed excellent materials and training programs to assist parents in helping their children to succeed in self-care. The American Red Cross, the National Safety Council, the Y, and Scout organizations have all developed helpful programs for the child who is alone. Whirlpool Foundation and the American Home Economics Association have developed Project Home Safe, a project which has been used by communities in six states to start up "survival skills" training for children in self-care. Many school teachers include units which reinforce safe practices, and many school districts sponsor parent education events to acquaint parents with strategies to help their children practice responsible self-care.

Members of the Committee felt that any of these roles and variations or combinations of these roles were appropriate measures for public schools to take if the local need for such services were identified and resources were available. A child who is cold, hungry, or frightened to return to an empty home is less likely to succeed in school. A child who enjoys a warm, welcoming, secure, and stimulating environment before and after school has a "head start" on educational success.

## A Variety of Latchkey Models

The committee members explored a variety of latchkey models, including community coordinated programs, programs provided by various community agencies in cooperation with public schools, and programs operated by school districts for the children in their district. The models summarized below are models about which the committee members were most knowledgeable. Many other, fine programs are in operation in various sections of the state.

### The Belleville Model: A School District/YMCA Program

The before- and after-school child care program in Belleville, Illinois, is a cooperative venture of Belleville Public School District #118 and the YMCA of Southwest Illinois. The YMCA program started in two schools in 1982 and has since expanded to thirteen attendance centers including surrounding school districts. Many school attendance centers have a program in their building. Bus service is provided for students from schools not having a program.

The cooperation which exists between the school district and the YMCA results in a program which

provides quality child care at a reasonable cost. The cost of the program is $19.00 per week for care from 7:00 a.m. until school begins and from the end of school until 5:30 p.m.

Scholarships are available through the YMCA for families with a financial need. The fees cover the operating costs of the program. The YMCA picks up the administrator's salary out of its general budget.

The financial contribution of the school district comes in the form of in-kind donations to the program. Transportation for children from a school not having a program to their program is provided on the school district's regular buses. These buses would normally be running between the schools before and after school or transporting students for classroom equalization. Other district contributions include the rooms required for the program, utilities, and extra janitorial services. The school buildings would normally be open during these periods for other before- and after-school activities, so it has not been necessary to open additional facilities. An added benefit of having the after-school child care program in the school buildings is that students may participate in many after school activities such as athletics, student council, and Just Say No.

The YMCA program is certified by the State of Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). In accordance with DCFS requirements, all personnel are required to meet certain minimum standards for training in the child care field.

### The Crystal Lake Model: A School District/Park District Program

The Crystal Lake Extended Time (E.T.) Program was initiated following a District 47 study and survey to determine the local need for latchkey care. The pilot program of after-school activities for "latchkey children" was started in two of the district's schools, a home school and a magnet school (to which students were bused from other schools).

After piloting the program for a year, it was evident that not only was an after-school program a real community need (there was a waiting list), but that a before-school program and a half-day program for kindergartners were also needed. On institute days, a full day "latchkey" was necessary.

District 47 is the governing body responsible for the child care program, but the day-to-day implementation of this program has been delegated to the Crystal Lake Park District with great success.

The full program now provides care at six elementary schools, one junior high school (kindergarten students are bused here from other schools), and Immanuel Lutheran (where students from Immanuel and St. Thomas are combined). The children are served breakfast and snacks. Activities are "designed to meet the interests, abilities and needs of the children enrolled."

The fees for this program are adjusted each year to maintain a "break-even" budget. Fees range from a two-week tuition of $32 for one child, five days, after school only, to a two-week tuition of $141 for two kindergarten children, 5 days, A.M. or P.M. The fees cover supervision, breakfast, snacks, transportation for kindergarten students and all supplies. Parents are billed bi-weekly. Additional expenses are incurred for field trips and in-service days. Scholarships are available.

On holidays, institute days, spring break and Christmas vacation, two of the eight schools are open; however, no transportation is provided. The cooks may prepare some snacks ahead of time with the staff buying and preparing food (juice, dry cereal). Children are expected to bring a sack lunch on these days.

The summer Extended Time Program continues as the Young Explorers' Camp. It includes grades K through 6 and is sponsored by the Crystal Lake Park District. The hours are the same as the regular school year, but the summer program is located in park district facilities.

During Extended Time registration, a parent handbook is presented which includes admission policies, operating policies, activities, tuitions, code of conduct, health requirements, etc.

The program has been in operation since 1983 and continues to be well accepted by the community. Since District 47 is in a growth mode, requests for this service are escalating. However, space is at a premium, and although there have been some waiting lists in the past, they now seem inevitable.

### The Evanston Model: Community Coordinated Child Care

The Evanston program is an example of one which was begun by a community group and subsequently taken over by the local school district. Day care was first offered in Evanston's public schools in 1967 when the Community Coordinated Child Care organization (or 4 C's) obtained city funds to operate summer day care for school-age children in Evanston School District 65.

In 1972, the 4 C's obtained its first day care contract with the State of Illinois to provide subsidized care under Title IVA and subcontracted with School District 65 to operate after-school programs in three schools. As the demand grew, the program was

expanded to seven sites. The district has always donated the space to the program with 4 C's paying staff and food costs for the eligible children and the over-income families paying a fixed fee.

In 1976, District 65 replaced Evanston 4 C's as the contracting agency for its child care program with the Department of Children and Family Services and entered into a subcontract with Evanston 4 C's to determine eligibility for parents requesting child care in District 65.

In 1982, the District 65 School Age Child Care Program was revised by the Board of Education to operate in each school on a full-year basis with a twelve-month budget. (Previously, kindergarten care had been centralized in one school, to which one hundred children were bused from their neighborhood schools after kindergarten classes.) Early morning care became available for the first time in 1982.

Today, District 65 operates three child care programs for approximately 647 children between 2 1/2 and 10 years of age:

(1) Headstart (149 children) is a half-day program for children who are 2 1/2 to 5 years old. The program operates four days weekly. Children attending Headstart half day, a.m. or p.m. sessions, are enrolled in the Community Child Care Program. The Headstart program is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services through the Community and Economics Development Association of Cook County;

(2) Community Child Care (93 children) is a full-day program (7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.) for children 2 1/2 to 5 years old. The majority of the children enrolled in this program are also enrolled in the Headstart half-day program;

(3) School-Age Child Care (405 children) serves children before and after regular school hours.

There is a waiting list for child care because the district does not have additional space available.

The program now is funded by outside sources and District 65. Outside sources include child care service fees received from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), parents' fees, and reimbursement received from the United States Department of Agriculture for foods used in the program. Funds and services provided by the district include:

* Space in which to operate the programs.
* Employee benefits.
* Custodial salaries (A % of time is allocated to the program).
* Depreciation expenses.

Each year the District enters into a purchase of service agreement with DCFS to provide child care services to children eligible for Federal funding of such services under Title XX of the Social Security Act. The agreement prescribes a per diem rate of funding per days of care of eligible children. DCFS will fund 75% of the amount not met by collection of the fee schedule. The remaining 25% contribution to the cost of the program is made up of the fair market value of the district's space which is used by the program.

### The Urbana Model: A School District's After-School Child Care Program

The Urbana After-School Child Care Program (ASCCP) is operated by the school district, but (unlike the Evanston program) it is not licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services. The program operates only in the afternoon (from 2:30-5:30 p.m.) and serves children who are in the all-day kindergarten program and other elementary children through grade four. It was the decision at the time the program began to cut it off at grade four because staff felt that activities for the older children would have to be quite different and that such activities would require additional space and staff. There is a program at three of the elementary schools in Urbana, and enrollment is limited by the space available to 170 children. This program does not use regular classroom space, but instead uses multi-purpose rooms and/or gymnasiums in the three schools where it is held. Since the Urbana elementary schools are full, the space available for this program is quite restricted.

The Urbana school district has made good use of the human resources of the university community in which it is located. The after-school child care program is staffed primarily by University of Illinois students, most of whom are seeking education degrees, though that is not a requirement for staff members. Working in a program such as this one is an invaluable experience for the education students and having a good pool of staff to draw from is useful to the school district. The three hour period for the program is also short enough that students can usually fit the work into their class schedules.

Not all children stay for the entire three hours each day, but the full fee is charged even if they leave early on one or more days. During the first year of the program, participants could attend 3, 4 or 5 days a week, but those variable attendance patterns became a bookkeeping problem. Now children are enrolled for the entire time. This year there have been programs all day on Teacher Institute days as well as the after-school program. About 1/3 of the regular enrollees have also been at the program on Institute days.

The Urbana program is a break-even operation, so the school district has not had to expend supplementary funds for it. However, the lack of a scholarship program or sliding scale for fees is a big drawback. Some youngsters who could really benefit from the program are not participating. Perhaps because the program does not serve scholarship students, it has had limited effect on truancy problems in the district.

Although it would be extremely beneficial to expand the program to serve students whose families have limited financial means, the space available for the program in Urbana's elementary schools is quite limited without using regular classroom space. Teaching staff, while recognizing the value of the program, are understandably reluctant to have after school programs in their classrooms on a regular basis. This is a problem which will need more exploration in order to arrive at a solution.

The director indicated that the district is just beginning to discuss the possibility of expanding the program to include a summer program as well. There has been interest on the part of many parents, so that is a real possibility. To expand the program to include all six elementary schools in Urbana, however, could require an additional supervisory person.

The program pays the district 15% for indirect costs associated with the program, including insurance plus funds to cover replacement of any physical education or other equipment damaged by the program. Tuition for the program is $180 for each nine-week session *plus* a $37.00 transportation fee if student is transported from his home school to one of the ASCCP sites. There is no discount for additional children from the same family taking part in the program.

The basic schedule includes 45 minutes of free play and a snack at the beginning, a group activity for approximately 1 1/2 hours, and 1/2 hour to 45 minutes of free play at the end of the afternoon.

The neighboring Champaign School District co-sponsors another after-school program, the Friendship Club, with the Champaign Park District. That program does have a sliding scale fee. The program is similar to Urbana's program in that it is only after school and is presently housed in a former elementary school building which has been targeted to be reopened because of increased enrollment in Champaign.

## Interlocking Issues of Affordability and Equity

Each of the preceding models has inherent advantages and disadvantages. The child care or latchkey programs operated by the schools themselves, with or without DCFS certification, allow school districts to control the content and quality of the programs and to see that the programs are coordinated or integrated with the regular school activities. A major advantage of certification by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is that it allows school districts to access state funds distributed by that state agency. DCFS certification may also reassure some educators and parents that state standards are being met in the child care programs. Such certification does require substantial time and, in some cases, may increase the costs of the programs. Some districts have clearly determined that the funding available from DCFS is a valuable and necessary asset and have therefore undergone the scrutiny necessary to obtain licensing. Any district considering the development of school-sponsored child care or latchkey services should carefully evaluate the requirements and impact of such certification.

Many schools have chosen to have other community agencies provide latchkey services, either independently or in cooperative ventures. In many of the cooperative efforts, the school district provides space and/or transportation to the site(s) of the after-school programs. In some programs, the school district also assumes the cost of utilities, janitorial service, and operational overhead. In some places, the school district may supply supervisory or administrative personnel to coordinate the program.

No matter what agency is sponsoring or operating the program, the interrelated factors of affordability and equity are primary concerns. The members of the Committee repeatedly returned to these two issues as two primary factors which affect the usefulness of a latchkey program. For no matter who operates a latchkey program, it must be affordable to its "patrons" or else it will be underenrolled and the cost per student will go up even further. A program which is beneficial to its student participants must, on the other hand, offer a variety of experiences and activities, some of which are expensive to provide. There are many parents who are willing and able to pay whatever is necessary to provide quality before- and after-school care for their children, but it is essential for board members to be aware of the large number of students whose families are not in that fortunate circumstance. Any agency providing before- and after-school care should be encouraged to seek out sufficient funding for its programs to offer sliding scale fees or scholarships for those youngsters who would benefit from a before- and/or after-school program, but whose families cannot afford the expense of such

a program.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The IASB Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children discovered that there are a wide variety of types of latchkey programs in existence in many communities throughout the state. Some of these are operated by for-profit organizations and are entirely separate from the school setting, some are joint operations of school districts and non-for-profit organizations such as the YMCA, etc., and some are entirely sponsored by school districts. In addition there are a few corporations which are addressing this need, though most corporate programs are primarily oriented toward providing day care for pre-school age children rather than the before- and after-school care described in this report. Depending upon the community and the type of program offered, there is a wide variation in cost for these programs.

In many areas, the demand for such services appears to exceed the availability of services. Crystal Lake, Evanston, and Urbana report waiting lists for their latchkey programs. In other areas, however, there appears to be considerably less need or demand for school-age child care. When the YMCA tried to expand its school-age child care into the rural communities surrounding Belleville, for example, the response was minimal. It was the opinion of the program director that these smaller communities had other options available to parents, such as extended families and neighbors.

The Committee felt strongly that it could not recommend a single model as the "solution" for the need for supervision and care of school-age children before and after school. Rather, the Committee found that the common characteristic shared by successful programs was that the programs were tailored to local needs, were adapted to local lifestyles, utilized local resources, and met local expectations.

Perhaps the representative from Rhodes Elementary School District 84.5, whose 1988 resolution stimulated the establishment of the IASB Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children, said it best when she suggested that the appropriate approach to providing latchkey services may be to borrow the theme of the Chicago Bears and do "whatever it takes" to meet the needs of increasing numbers of youngsters who do not have a parent at home after school. The provision of after-school care and supervisory services calls for the public schools to undertake unorthodox activities. If however, students are going to be provided with a safe environment which will nurture the development of academic and social skills, study habits and self-esteem, school districts may need to assume a more active role in encouraging the development of latchkey programs. Such programs may provide the schools with an opportunity to help achieve the goals that they have for students and to provide additional support mechanisms for the total child.

The IASB Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children therefore submits the following recommendations to the Board of Directors:

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**The Committee believes:**

1) Local situations are unique, and any latchkey and/or daycare programs should be tailored to meet local needs.

2) Financing of school district latchkey programs should be at the discretion of the local district. Consideration should be given to providing equal access for all eligible children.

**Therefore, the Committee:**

3) Opposes state or federally mandated latchkey programs because of the diversity of local needs and the legitimate concerns of local boards of education regarding the availability and use of tax dollars for latchkey services and other non-curricular programs.

4) Encourages local school districts to consider use of local resources and cooperation with other agencies to meet local needs for latchkey services.

5) Encourages local districts to make information regarding latchkey services in the community available to parents. The Committee feels that all schools should be able to direct interested parents to available source(s) of information regarding latchkey services.

6) Recommends revisions in the Child Care Act to allow districts that want to operate state licensed programs in schools to do so without additional physical requirements or modifications to school buildings. In other words, the Committee believes that any school facility approved as a school building in accordance with the life-safety provisions of *The School Code* and fire marshals' regulations should automatically be considered adequate for before- and after-school latchkey programs for school children and child care for children of the same ages. The Committee recommends that IASB undertake such actions as may be necessary to achieve such an outcome.

7) Recommends that IASB take steps to increase school board members' awareness of the need for before- and/or after-school care for school age chil-

dren and the potential role(s) of local school districts in regard to such care. This awareness could be accomplished through panels or presentations at IASB meetings and/or articles in IASB publications.

## National Developments

The Committee would also like to direct the attention of the IASB Board of Directors to four resolutions enacted by the 1989 Delegate Assembly of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) when it met in Anaheim, California, on March 31-April 3, 1989.

**2.1.19 Early Childhood Education.**

NSBA supports prekindergarten education in the public schools. The federal role in prekindergarten education should include discretionary grants as well as research and information programs. Any federal appropriations should be in addition to, not in lieu of, current federal funding levels for K-12 programs.

NSBA recommends that school district prekindergarten programs should not be mandated by other governmental units and that other public and private agencies should contribute appropriate services and funding for such programs.

**2.1.33 Child Care.**

NSBA believes that any federal child care legislation should recognize that child care is beyond the local school district's educational responsibilities and should thus:

a) be discretionary;

b) permit districts that do offer such services flexibility to design programs to meet community needs;

c) not impose additional regulatory or financial obligations on school districts;

d) not divert from elementary and secondary education; and,

e) not penalize school districts that do not offer child care.

**4.1.27 Community Education and Day Care.**

NSBA supports maximum use of public school facilities for public community education. NSBA urges the school boards to develop programs that will provide for interaction between the schools and the community, including those that provide day care and services for latchkey children, provided that these programs do not adversely affect the school district's educational responsibilities.

**4.1.39 Child Care.**

NSBA supports quality child care programs and will continue to advocate day care programs that provide age-appropriate educational activities to prepare children for school, but opposes placing students into academic programs before they are ready.

Further, working with Federation Members, NSBA will identify criteria that can be used by local school districts in determining whether to enter the day care field, either to serve young children or to provide before-and after-school care for school age children. NSBA believes that all child care programs should assure:

a) that equality of opportunity is guaranteed for all children without regard to their parents' income level;

b) that day care workers are properly educated and trained for their jobs;

c) that child care legislation shall provide the same first amendment separation of church and state protections that are required for other education programs. NSBA opposes federal voucher-type funding for day care; and

d) in establishing programs, school districts should give priority consideration to attendance areas with high concentrations of disadvantaged children.

Members of the IASB Ad Hoc Committee on Latchkey Children feel that their recommendations to the Board of Directors are consistent with the above NSBA positions.

Child care is a timely topic that is receiving considerable attention at the national level. The primary focus at the national level is on early child care, as opposed to services specifically targeted at latchkey children. A conference committee will try this fall to work out the differences in several child care/early childhood education proposals, including House Bill H.R. 3, the Senate "ABC" bill, and a third proposal currently under discussion in the Ways and Means Committee. Only H.R. 3 would provide any funds that could be used for latchkey services. At this point in time, it is not possible to predict what form a final child care package may take nor the federal funds or tax credits that may accompany such a package.

**Additional Resources**

Vicki L. Stoecklin
Day Care Development Specialist
Office of Child Development
Department of Children and Family Services
406 East Monroe
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1498
Phone: 217/785-9206

Christine M. Todd
Extension Specialist in Child Development
Cooperative Extension Service
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
543 Bevier Hall
905 S. Goodwin Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801
Phone: 217/244-2846

**U.S. Department of Labor**

Data base on child care and other family-oriented employment policies.

Women's Bureau
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C. 20210
Call toll-free: 1-800-827-5335

**Other materials:**

*Child Care Manual* examines employer-supported programs. Available for $40 from:

Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission
400 West Madison
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone: 312/454-0400

*Quality Child Care Makes Good Business Sense*, a guide to operating a child care center, is available for $2 from:

SBA Publications
P.O. Box 30
Denver, Colorado 80201

*How to Select the Best Child Care Option for Your Employees* is a new guidebook available for $13.50 from:

Almar Press
4105 Binghampton Drive
Binghampton, New York 13903

In addition to the information contained here, the report of the IASB Committee on Latchkey Children included an extensive bibliography and a list of 182 Illinois public schools that offer before and after school day care programs. To obtain these materials (single copies only), call or write IASB Publications, in Springfield, and request:

Item 90-2A--IASB Latchkey Bibliography
Item 90-2B--Schools with Latchkey Programs, 1988-89

1/90-3000-053

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